

at dawn, at noon, at night, in shine and rain
and snow; he travels to the rocky shore of a boisterous and
predatory sea; he finds fairyland in the magic garden of the
Paradou; he roams the bleak coal country of the north; he is
"buffeted by the mistral and scorched by the blazing sun of
Provence; he gazes on La Beauce, an ocean of waving corn,
and on the battlefield of Sedan, strewn with the dead and
dying. Religion, politics, sociology, art, science, trade,
agriculture, military affairs, life's characteristics, duties,
functions, errors and aims, love, marriage, eating, drinking, and
a hundred other matters are discussed before him.
Beautiful friendships, confiding loves, ardent passions, terrible
jealousies and rivalries, lofty aspirations, horrid lusts,
generous sacrifices, deeds of bravery and virtue, cruelty and
vengeance, greed, craft, and cowardice, — in a word, both the
nobility and the mire of life in turn confront one, in such wise
that this Kougon-Macquart series is like a miniature world.

It has been previously shown that Zola began to study and plan the series in the middle of 1868, and commenced his first volume in May, 1869. For some seven or eight months, during the war of 1870-1871, he had been obliged to set Ms work aside, but apart from that break it had occupied the greater part of his attention during all the years that elapsed until "Le Docteur Pascal" appeared in 1893.

Every year, as a rule, some months were occupied in framing a new volume, then several were given to the actual writing of it. In the first instance it was usually necessary to visit places and people; and in some cases certain branches of the chosen subject had to be studied in books, chiefly of a technical nature. This brings one to the consideration of a legend which has grown up around Zola and much of his